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January 22, 2007

Testimony to the Montana Legislature:

*Clean Renewable Energy Bond Financing (HB 330)*

Mr. Chair and Committee Members, my name is Ed Meece (M-E-E-C-E), City Manager, Livingston Montana. **The City of Livingston encourages this committee to pass HB 330**, as an important step toward providing local communities the authority to explore the feasibility of initiating renewable energy projects AND as a tool for financing such projects that are economically and environmentally beneficial.

As the City of Livingston is currently considering a local wind-energy project, we are evaluating potential fiscal impacts (revenue and expense), environmental and cultural sensitivities, and how it contributes to the overall development of renewable energy sources on a state and national level. However, without this legislation our efforts to pursue such a project would be extremely difficult; if not impossible.

Certainly, we have plenty of wind in Livingston! If scientific and economic analysis reveals that we can utilize this resource in a responsible manner, for the good of our community and our fellow citizens; then, to do less, would be poor public stewardship. I would stress that our community is not interested in pursuing some risky scheme – a project of this nature would undergo substantial internal and external scrutiny.

There is some question as to whether projects of this type are philosophically appropriate for local government to undertake. However, government has often been the catalyst for addressing emerging demands for service and innovation -- before the private sector is able or willing to invest. Some examples would be local water utilities, sewer districts, rural electric cooperatives, and now, potentially, wind energy. As I said before, these type of projects will receive substantial public scrutiny, if citizens don't believe a given project is in the best interest of their community; you can be sure their voice will be heard. In essence, this legislation is simply about providing communities the *ability* to make decisions about local resource management.

**Again, I appreciate your attention on this matter and encourage passage of HB 330.**

